26 Secret Servicemen Protecting Johnson

Associated Press

Assignment of more than 20 Secret Service agents to protect former President Lyndon B. Johnson was reported yesterday by Rep. Tom Steed (D-Okla.). He called it "par for the course."

Steed is chairman of a House subcommittee in charge of the Secret Service budget.

He said he had no exact figures on how many agents are assigned to Mr. Johnson. But a published report that 26 men are on the detail "seems reasonable enough," he added.

To keep one agent on duty at all times on an 8-hour shift and a 40-hour week, Steed said, requires 21 men. Frequently, more than one agent is on duty, depending on what Mr. Johnson is doing at the time.

"Johnson is very active and he gets around a lot," Steed remarked. "It takes a lot of men and equipment to provide him the protection required by law."

The law requires the Secret Service to provide protection for former Presidents and members of their families living with them.

The amount of protection provided, Steed said, varies with the activities of the person being protected. The Chicago Tribune said 26 Secret Servicemen have been assigned to Mr. Johnson, now at his Texas ranch.

Former President Eisenhower and his wife, Mamie, have 13 agents and five cars assigned to them, the Tribune said. The Eisenhower detail is smaller because he is hospitalized and not traveling.

Former President Truman doesn't want Secret Service agents around when he's home, Steed said. "He chases them away."

The number of agents assigned to Mr. Truman and his wife was not disclosed.

"The people being protected are entitled to the protection," Steed said. "They are public figures because the people made them public figures. You'd be surprised how many nuts are running around who would like to harm the people being protected. There are files containing about 138,000 names of individuals suspected of having some reason for wanting to harm a President or a former President or someone in the family."